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AMERICAN EXPLORERS OF AFRICA

By EDWIN SWIFT BALCH

[With separate illustration, Pl. II, facing p. 280.]

Americans are different from Englishmen in regard to their great travelers. The British always make the most of their great travelers. They give them full credit for what they have accomplished, they keep on their charts all English names and all names given by English discoverers, and in so doing sometimes they eliminate the names given by earlier explorers of other nationalities. We Americans, on the contrary, do not stand up enough for our great travelers. For instance, no official protest has been made, as should have been done, in regard to the name of Wilkes Land. Americans are a patriotic people, their conduct in the present world war shows it, but, in regard to geographical discoveries outside of the United States made by Americans, they seem too inert and too indifferent to assert themselves and to back up their own sons.

Among the geographical discoveries by Americans which are too much neglected at home are those made in Africa. And yet in the closing period of the "age of discovery," in which the secrets of the so-called Dark Continent were revealed, three Americans, Paul Belloni Du Chaillu, Charles Chaillé-Long, and Arthur Donaldson Smith, and one Anglo-American, Henry M. Stanley, made certain the existence of a race of African pygmies, put upon the map the greater part of the course of the Congo, and cleared up a large part of the mystery of the source of the Nile. And as it happens that, from accidental circumstances, I was thrown into relation with all four of these distinguished men, some notes of a reminiscent character about the three who have passed away may be of value in the history of geographical discovery.

THE PYGMIES

That there were pygmy tribes in Africa was asserted by Herodotus, who, of course, is supposed to have drawn on his imagination for his facts. In the beginning of the seventeenth century A. D., Andrew Battel¹ speaks of a West African tribe called Matimbos, whom he does not claim to have seen, and who, he says, are no bigger than boys twelve years old but are very stout. In the nineteenth century several travelers reported seeing individual dwarfs from the far interior. For instance Dr. Krapf,² one of the discoverers of Kenia and Kilimanjaro, examined one slave who was only four feet high, besides hearing in Shoa of a tribe of dwarfs living to the south of Abyssinia.

¹ The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, etc., in "Purchas his Pilgrimes," Glasgow, 1905-07, Vol. 6, p. 401.

² J. L. Krapf: Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours, London, 1860, pp. 51-54.

It was the American, Paul Belloni Du Chaillu, however, who actually determined the existence of a race of pygmies and brought back an account of them from the depths of the gloomy Gabun forest where he, first of all white men, visited one of their settlements. He had been already largely discredited because he was the first to hunt and kill the gorilla.³ Huxley, for instance, criticized him severely and asserted that though Du Chaillu's statements might be true they were not evidence.⁴ How it is that in science true statements are not evidence Huxley does not explain. It is also well to remember that some of Huxley's own very positive opinions, as for instance those about the Neanderthal man,⁵ have not stood the test of time. But the discovery of the pygmies by Du Chaillu, coming so soon after his account of the gorilla, did not help to improve his reputation.

The American Chaillé-Long⁶ and the Italian Miami first brought back living pygmies from the Niam-Niam country. Later the Anglo-American Henry M. Stanley⁷ in the Congo forest, and still later the Philadelphian Arthur Donaldson Smith⁸ in eastern Africa, completed the discovery of the belt of pygmy tribes extending across equatorial Africa. It is, therefore, correct to assert that the existence of a race of African dwarfs was revealed to the world mainly by Americans.

DU CHAILLU

The venturesome journeys of Du Chaillu made substantial additions not only to zoölogy and to ethnology but also to geography proper. For on those journeys he broke much fresh ground in the unknown hinterland of West Africa, between the equator and the mouth of the Congo. The country formerly called the Gabun and now usually called the French Congo, with its pygmies, its cannibal Fan tribes, and its gorillas, was revealed to the world by Du Chaillu. He explored the Ogowe River and the Rio Fernand Vaz and on his last journey advanced into Ashango Land to Muau Kombo, about 1° 50' S. and 12° 40' E., where he found some creeks running eastward.⁹

Du Chaillu I knew only at the end of his life, long after he had ceased his adventurous hunting career. He was of French descent, short of stature, and plain in appearance. He was a very pleasant man, sociable and friendly. He was not in the least embittered, although he had every reason to be; for he told me that years after all his statements had been verified, many people still disbelieved in his discoveries and as a rule looked on him as a sort of Baron Munchausen.

³ P. B. Du Chaillu: *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, London, 1861.

⁴ T. H. Huxley: *Evidence As to Man's Place in Nature*, London, 1863, pp. 53, 54.

⁵ Arthur Keith: *The Antiquity of Man*, London, 1915, pp. 130, 131.

⁶ Charles Chaillé-Long: *My Life in Four Continents*, 2 vols., London, 1912, pp. 126-131.

⁷ H. M. Stanley: *In Darkest Africa*, 2 vols., New York, 1890, *passim*.

⁸ A. Donaldson Smith: *Through Unknown African Countries*, London and New York, 1897, pp. 272-277.

⁹ P. B. Du Chaillu: *A Journey to Ashango-Land*, New York, 1867.

SOURCES OF THE NILE

It was that weird character, Richard F. Burton, who first successfully led an expedition from the east into Africa in search of the reported lakes.¹⁰ Lady Burton states that Burton applied for Captain Speke as a companion.¹¹ Burton certainly deserves more credit than he usually receives, for his discovery of Lake Tanganyika was the start in clearing up the mysteries of the sources of the Nile and the Congo. On the return journey, while Burton was lying ill at Kazeh, or Tabora, Speke made a flying trip northward and reached the southern extremity of a great lake which he believed was the source of the Nile.¹² Burton naturally said that Speke was a humbug. Speke, however, started afterwards on another journey with Colonel J. A. Grant,¹³ passed all around the western edge of this lake, which he called Victoria Nyanza, reached a point north of it where a great river was flowing north, and crossed this river again at a point farther west. This river he asserted was the White Nile. On his return he drew, almost entirely from hearsay, a map of the Nile sources¹⁴ which is so nearly correct that it must be looked on, together with Wilkes's chart of the Antarctic Continent,¹⁵ as among the most marvelous achievements of cartography.

Sir Samuel White Baker next added largely to the knowledge of the Nile sources. He discovered Albert Nyanza and coasted along its eastern shore until he reached the mouth of the inflowing Nile, whose exit from Victoria Nyanza had been visited by Speke. But Baker made one remarkable error. As he stood on the heights above Vacovia, at the extreme south-eastern end of Albert Nyanza, he persuaded himself that he was looking over a sheet of water stretching south into indefinite distance, and he thus laid down the lake on his map. In fact, while Speke seemed to guess geographical features intuitively right, Baker seemed to guess them intuitively wrong.¹⁶

CHAILLÉ-LONG

Charles Chaillé-Long comes next in time as one of the discoverers of the sources of the Nile. He reached Victoria Nyanza from the north and was the first white man to paddle on its waters. On his return he explored the great river which drains Victoria Nyanza and which is the main upper branch of the White Nile. While paddling down it in canoes, amid hostile tribes and almost superhuman difficulties, he discovered a third unreported great Nilotic lake which, on his return, the Khedive Ismail named Lake Ibrahim.¹⁷

¹⁰ R. F. Burton: *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 2 vols., London, 1860.

¹¹ Isabel Burton: *The Life of Captain Sir Richd. F. Burton*, New York, 1893, p. 257.

¹² J. H. Speke: *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, Edinburgh and London, 1864.

¹³ J. A. Grant: *A Walk Across Africa*, Edinburgh and London, 1864.

¹⁴ J. H. Speke: *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, Edinburgh and London, 1863.

¹⁵ Charles Wilkes: *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, Philadelphia, 1845.

¹⁶ S. W. Baker: *The Albert Nyanza, Great Basin of the Nile*, London, 1866; *idem*: *Ismailia*, New York, 1875.

¹⁷ Charles Chaillé-Long: *Central Africa: Naked Truths of Naked People*, London, 1876.

In Africa, Chaillé-Long afterwards led an expedition from Lado on the Nile into the Niam-Niam country, where he received the dwarf Ticki-Ticki as a present and where he beheld the Niam-Niams feasting after a battle upon their slain enemies. Chaillé-Long also commanded an expedition which for awhile occupied the land near the mouth of the Juba River. Some years after this, he was the first white man to visit the large island of Quelpaert, off the coast of Korea, and he also stumbled across the statue

of Marco Polo in the "Great Flowery Temple of Five-Hundred Genii" in Canton.¹⁸

Chaillé-Long was of French descent. He was most lovable, courteous, and charming, a true gentleman of the old school, and as brave a man as ever lived. I met him only during his later years, when I had a great deal of correspondence with him. In one of his letters he wrote most feelingly about Mr. George C. Hurlbut, the former editor of the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, who had just been killed in an automobile accident. He had the highest opinion of Hurlbut, an opinion with which I am in thorough accord, because, with a sense of humor which flashed out now and then in his articles, Hurlbut was a searcher for the truth and was not afraid



FIG. 1—Charles Chaillé-Long, 1842-1917.
(Courtesy of Mrs. Chaillé-Long.)

to espouse an unpopular cause when he thought it a worthy one. Chaillé-Long also thought most highly of Chinese Gordon as a man and as a soldier. But he did not look on him in the least as a saint. In fact the real Gordon was probably a very different character from what he has been represented to be by some of his admirers.

Chaillé-Long deserves a high place among world explorers. As yet he has not received the credit due him, and this is partly because he was an American. His labors cleared up a large part of the Nile mystery and entitle him to rank as one of the four discoverers of the sources of that river. His explorations were made while he was in the service of the Egyptian Government, and it was on this account that, when he discovered a third and a totally unsuspected great Nile lake, the Khedive Ismail named it Lake Ibrahim, after his soldier father, Ibrahim Pasha.¹⁹ But when the British declared a protectorate over Egypt, they were not especially desirous that the Egyptian control of Uganda and other provinces of the White Nile region should be remembered, and possibly for that reason, although they were careful to retain the names Victoria, Albert, and Albert Edward for the other three great Nilotic lakes, they changed the name of Lake Ibrahim to Lake Kioga. It was only by a personal appeal to that great

¹⁸ Chaillé-Long, *op. cit.* in footnote 6, *passim*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

man, King Edward VII, that Chaillé-Long was able to have the name Ibrahim placed on British official maps together with the name Kioga.²⁰

STANLEY

Henry M. Stanley followed Chaillé-Long and completes the quartet of discoverers of the sources of the White Nile. On his second journey he



FIG. 2— Henry M. Stanley in the United States Navy uniform he wore at the capture of Fort Fisher, January 15, 1865.

circumnavigated Victoria Nyanza, which he proved to have been laid down by Speke with almost absolute correctness. Thence he followed known trails to Nyangwe, 4° 15' S. This was the farthest point reached on the Congo by that noble Scotchman David Livingstone, who explored the headwaters of the Congo yet curiously enough never realized that he was on the Congo but died believing that he was among the headwaters of the Nile.²¹ From Nyangwe, Stanley pushed down the Congo in canoes and amidst fearful dangers followed the course of the great African river to the Atlantic Ocean.²² On his last journey Stanley explored the whole of the tributary of the Congo, the Aruwimi River. He then discovered Albert Edward Nyanza, Ruwenzori, or the Mountains of the Moon, and the Semliki River, which drains this vast extent of mountainous country and is the

second great headwater of the White Nile.²³

It was my good fortune, on one occasion, at the very outset of his career, to see a great deal of Henry M. Stanley. I was still a boy, and we were then living in Paris at 48 Avenue Gabriel, on the Champs Elysées. My father made a trip to Egypt at the time of the opening of the Suez Canal and met Stanley at Cairo in February, 1869. In his diary my father records that Stanley had been "sent to Aden en route to Zanzibar to meet Dr. Livingstone, but at Aden met a British ship returning with news that there was no chance of Livingstone coming back that way. Pursuant to

²⁰ Chaillé-Long, *op. cit.* in footnote 6, pp. 543-569.

²¹ Horace Waller: *The Last Journals of David Livingstone*, New York, 1875, pp. 322, 416, 476. etc.

²² H. M. Stanley: *Through the Dark Continent*, 2 vols., New York, 1878.

²³ Stanley, *op. cit.* in footnote 7.

orders he came to Cairo to organize an expedition to meet Livingstone on the Nile, but here met Dr. Kirk's [letter] and now returns to New York via Paris."

My father gave Stanley a letter of introduction to us, and when he came to see us and found I could speak French like a Parisian and was tremendously interested in African exploration he asked me to act as his guide and

To my dear Young friend
 Edwin
 from
 Henry Morlake Stanley
 Feb 27th 1869.

FIG. 3—Autograph in the copy of Livingstone's "Missionary Travels" presented to the author by Stanley.

interpreter during his stay in Paris. I used to walk down every morning to the Hôtel du Louvre, where he was staying, and go with him everywhere—to the Louvre, to Versailles, to Vincennes, to Saint Cloud, and other places. I remember how especially he was interested in "Le Stryge" at Notre Dame. The bill for our excursions was paid by the *New York Herald*.

Stanley was a Welshman by birth, but he was brought up in America, and, at least at the time when I was thrown in contact with him, his characteristics were purely American. He was in no respect English in his ways. A rather short, extremely stocky man, he suggested immense physical strength and was distinctly a man of action rather than a man of thought.

THE SEARCH FOR LIVINGSTONE

Stanley and I became fast friends during the time we were together, and I was so enthusiastic about African exploration that, when he started in the fall of 1869 on his circuitous journey which led him across Persia and finally to Africa in search of Livingstone, he wrote and asked me to accom-

pany him. This invitation my parents declined to let me accept, fortunately for me or I should not now be writing this article. On his departure from Paris, as he thought he should have no further use for them, he gave me the copy of Livingstone's "Missionary Travels"²⁴ and the copy of Young's "Search after Livingstone"²⁵ that he had purchased when he started for Zanzibar to interview Livingstone on his expected arrival at the coast. On the back of the map in Young's book he had jotted down at Aden the following questions to put to Livingstone (reproduced in facsimile on Pl. II).

1. How came Moosa to be separated from you?
 2. Where did the Johanna men leave you?
 3. Did Wakotani leave you as is said?
 4. How far up the Rovuma did you go.
 5. What point did you touch the Lake Nyassa.
 6. What date.
 7. How many days did you tarry at the Lake.
 8. Did you suffer any inconvenience from the Ma-zitus.
 9. Were you kindly treated by the Chipeta people.
 10. Also the Babrisa people.
 11. Did you have a dog named Chitani with you.
- What date did you land at Zanzibar?
 How many days to Nyassa.
 Did Marenga treat you well.
 Did you stop at Corma.
 You avoided the Ma-zitus in toto.
 Did Moosa separate from you at Marenga. Page 178.
 Did you go to the northern or the southern end of Lake Nyassa.
 Was the Havildar killed at Mapunda, or was Moosa robbed and ill treated. 198.
 Did Chitani's tail turn to the left as Buffon remarks that peculiarity of dogs.
 Are the Makololos and Ma-zitus dwarfs(?)
 Have you been sick.
 Did you kill a chief of the Ma-zitus. 231.
 How long did you stop with the Ma-Takas. See Appendix.
 How long were you in the vicinity of Lake Pamalombe.
 Lake Tanganyika you were at in October last year, in Ujiji.

The present generation, of course, has forgotten the avidity with which news about the sources of the Nile was received half a century ago. To anyone, however, who remembers the excitement caused by Livingstone's reported murder, the questions will recall one of the most thrilling incidents in African exploration. But the autograph has one especial interest: it is absolutely the first thing that Stanley ever did in connection with Livingstone. It is true Stanley had been to Magdala with Napier's military expedition against King Theodoros,²⁶ but he had no idea of becoming an African explorer when he was first sent to meet Livingstone, in fact he told me that, if he was lucky, he was in hopes of some day exploring Central

²⁴ David Livingstone: A Popular Account of Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa, London, 1861.

²⁵ E. D. Young: The Search after Livingstone, London, 1868.

²⁶ H. M. Stanley: Coomassie and Magdala, London, 1874.

1 What cause Moosa to have separated from you?

2 Where did the Johanna men leave you?

3 Did Makotum leave you as said?

4 How far up the Rovuma did you go?

5 What point did you take the Lake Nyasa? What date?

6 How many days did you stay at the Lake?

7 Did you suffer any sickness from the Ma-jitus?

8 Were you kindly treated by the Chipeta people?

9 How the Babirou people?

10 Did you have a dog named Chitani with you?

What date did you land at Zambar?

How many days to Nyasou?

Did Maneyu treat you well did you stop at Chroma?

You avoided the Ma-jitus in toto. Did Moosa separate from you at Maseyga. Page 178.

Did you go to the northern or the southern of Lake Nyasa?

Was the Haidja killed at Mapunda. or was Moosa killed? 198.

Did Chitani's tail turn to the left as Baffa remarks that peculiarly of dogs?

Are the Makololo & Magilun done?

Have you been sick?

Did you

Mazga

How long

Mar-5

How long

of Lake

Lake Ma

October

What date did you land at
Zambar?²
How many days to Nyasou.
Did Maneyu treat you well
did you stop at Choma.
You avoided the Ma-jits in toto.
Did Mosa separate from you
at Maseyga. Page 178.
Did you go to the northern
or the southern of Lake Nyasou.
Was the Haildun killed at
Mapunda. or was Mosa
Haka & Ulluka 198.
Did Chitani's Tail turn to
the left as Buzza remarks
that peculiarly of days
Are the Makolola & Magila done
Have you been sick

Did you kill a chief of the
Magilus 231.
How long did you stop with the
Ma-Jahais. See appendix
How long were you in the vicinity
of Lake Panalombe.
Lulu Mymajika you were at in
October last year. in Ujiji -

Asia. These questions therefore were merely jottings for an interview which never took place, but they were the very start of all the work Stanley afterwards did in Africa, in finding Livingstone, in exploring the Nile and the Congo, and in connection with the founding of the Congo Free State.

Stanley told me many things about his early career, some of which are not published in his biography.²⁷ One of them was his making a voyage as a sailor before the mast to Spain when he was about sixteen years of age. When the crew was not allowed to land at some Spanish port, Stanley quietly jumped overboard and swam ashore. During the Civil War, he said, he acted for a while as reporter for a Northern newspaper. One morning, about five o'clock, he was lying in his tent with another reporter on the outskirts of the camp, when he was aroused by an unusual noise. He looked out and saw a Confederate regiment, which had surprised the pickets, advancing with fixed bayonets in full charge. Stanley bolted and escaped, while his companion was captured. He wrote a few lines in the copy of Livingstone's "Travels" he presented to me, and these I reproduce in facsimile (Fig. 3) because at the time I knew Stanley he called himself "Henry Morelake Stanley," a name he seems later to have changed to "Henry Morton Stanley."

The brilliant record of American enterprise in the exploration of Africa should certainly receive more attention than it does from our historical geographers. They should follow the excellent example of our British cousins of celebrating the fame of their great explorers and should see to it that the names of Du Chaillu, Chaillé-Long, Stanley, and Donaldson Smith are kept alive in our schools and our histories as those of men who have deserved well of America.

²⁷ Dorothy Stanley, edit.: *The Autobiography of Sir Henry Morton Stanley*, Boston and New York, 1909.